



## ***DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program Status Report:***

### **Lesotho**



## **BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction/General Information**

The population of Lesotho is estimated between 2 and 2.2 million, with reported life expectancy between 47 and 51 years, down significantly due to the AIDS epidemic. English is the official language in Lesotho, which has an estimated countrywide literacy rate of 83%, disproportionately distributed between men and women. Lesotho is a developing country with an economy that is based primarily in subsistence agriculture; estimated annual per capita income ranges from \$550 to \$2,450.

### **Country HIV/AIDS Statistics and Risk Factors**

HIV/AIDS prevalence in Lesotho is estimated to be approximately 31%; 360,000 people are believed to be living with HIV. Identified significant risk factors include lack of treatment and care for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unprotected heterosexual contact with multiple partners, including commercial sex workers.

### **Military HIV/AIDS Information**

Lesotho's military size is estimated at 2,000. Prevalence rates among Lesotho's military personnel are unavailable since HIV testing is not routinely done; however, rates are believed to parallel those found in the civilian population.



DHAPP HIV consultants met with the US Ambassador to Lesotho.

## **PROPOSED PROGRAM**

Lesotho's military force proposal for HIV prevention activities was coordinated between the Defense Attaché Office (DAO) and the Office of Defense Cooperation in South Africa. Under the proposal, 3 prospective HIV counselors would be sent to a 7-week course of peer education emphasizing a train-the-trainer approach. The 3 new peer trainers would then provide troops education on HIV risk factors in the form of two workshops, 5 days each, resulting in the overall training of 30 participants. Finally, the proposal indicated that these trained personnel would conduct ongoing outreach visits to all the bases and platoons in Lesotho's small military services for continued HIV prevention, mass awareness campaigns, and surveillance.

## **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

### **Military-to-Military**

DHAPP staff discussed HIV/AIDS prevention in the Lesotho Defense Force with the US Ambassador in November 2001. In December 2001, DHAPP staff informed the HIV/AIDS coordinator for the Lesotho Defense Force that funding was available. In March 2002, DHAPP staff visited Lesotho and received the Lesotho Defense Force prevention plan, which was followed up in August 2003 with a site visit by DHAPP staff, senior academic and military physicians, and laboratory specialists. In March 2003, DHAPP arranged for a site visit by a senior infectious disease physician and laboratory technician from University of California San Diego (UCSD) School of Medicine.



US HIV specialists sponsored by DHAPP conferred with Lesotho military medical staff.

With this input, the following 2003 priorities were established: (1) technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and Military regarding health communication and social marketing of HIV prevention messages; (2) technical assistance in tuberculosis prevention, control, and management; (3) training nurses and physicians in pretest and posttest counseling for HIV screening, management, and prevention of opportunistic infections, and use of antiretroviral therapy; and (4) training in infection control policies and practices.

Materials purchased thus far with DHAPP funds include a computer system, laboratory equipment, and supplies that include microscopes and a Coulter Counter.



DHAPP sponsored a senior HIV physician specialist (left) to provide hands-on laboratory training in Lesotho.

### **Clinical Provider Training**

A senior infectious diseases physician and senior microbiology laboratory technician from UCSD School of Medicine provided on-site training for 2 weeks in April 2003. Topics that were covered included managing opportunistic infections and tuberculosis, infection control, and use of antiretroviral therapy. Laboratory techs were trained in slide microscopy for bacteriology and mycobacterium. Two Lesotho-based laboratory technicians and 2 clinical nurses were approved to receive 2 weeks of intensive training in microbiology, clinical management, and infection control at UCSD Medical Center in San Diego. It is anticipated that this training will occur in the summer of 2003.

## **PROGRAM IMPACT**

### **Master Trainers and Peer Educators**

None at this time.

### **Number of Troops Trained**

None at this time.



DHAPP funded training for Lesotho Defense Force nurses and technicians and enhanced their laboratory infrastructure.

### **Potential Number of Troops Affected**

DHAPP funds sponsored HIV prevention efforts that can reach 2,000 troops.

### **Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT)**

None at this time.

### **Laboratory Capability/Infrastructure**

Two senior nurses and 2 laboratory technicians were approved to attend a 14-day clinical laboratory management course at UCSD during the summer of 2003. In addition, DHAPP arranged for senior-level clinical and laboratory staff from UCSD to train Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) personnel in state-of-the-art HIV diagnostic and clinical management protocols.

### **Mass Awareness**

None at this time.